AN EPISTLE TO THE Flock of God.

WHO

Are called to bear Teſtimony for the Name of the Lord at this day through ſufferings. Sent unto them for the building up of the weak of the Flock in their moſt precious Faith, and for the ſtrengthening of them in their perſecuted and ſuffering Eſtate: In which alſo for their encouragement the purpoſe of God in their preſent ſufferings is declared. By a ſuffering Servant of God, whoſe life is not dear unto Him for the ſake of the Lord Jeſus.

J. COALE.

Believe in the Lord God, ſo ſhall you be eſtabliſhed, Believe in his Prophets, ſo ſhall you proſper, 2 Chron. 20. 20

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474

An Epiſtle to the Flock of God.

My Beloved Dear Friends,

WHOM the Lord God Almighty hath viſited with his Everlaſting loving kindneſs, and unto whom he hath cauſed the Everlaſting day to dawn, and the Sonne of Righteouſneſs to ariſe, and whom he hath called out of the World, and ſeparated from its wayes, Worſhips and Traditions, and from the defilements and abominations thereof, that you might be a peculiar People unto himſelf, zealous of Good Works, that he might make known unto you that myſtery of his Kingdom, which hath been hid from ages and generations paſt, that ſo you might ſtand faithful and true Witneſſes for his name and truth, and appear on his behalf in the demonſtration of his own life and ſpirit, and that you might bear a faithful Teſtimony for that bleſſed everlaſting and unchangeable truth (which he hath manifeſted in your inward parts) not onely in Doctrine, life and converſation, but alſo by ſuffering (for its ſake) whatſoever the enemies thereof ſhall be permitted to inflict upon you, that thereby you may be approved not onely in the ſight of God, but alſo of all good Men.

I ſay unto you my beloved Friends, prize your honourable, and holy calling, wherewith the Lord Almighty hath called you, and therein walk with God, and think it not hard nor ſtrange that He ſuffreth you ſo long to be tryed and exerciſed in ſuffrings as you have been hitherto, and are at this day, for your Teſtimony ſake; but look over it all, and lift up your heads above all, for the Lord hath aſſuredly an end in it, for his own Glory, and for the exaltation and ſpreading abroad that bleſſed truth which we profeſs and live in, and which we ſuffer for, and alſo for the gathering into it many who are yet afar off from Him, and ſtrangers unto him; ſo that whatſoever come; whether bonds, or exilement, or what exerciſes ſoever we meet withal, in this we may all be ſatisfied, that it ſhall make for the furtherance of the Goſpel of Chriſt, and for good unto all who continue their obedience in Him unto the end, and abide

faithful unto death. Wherefore (my Dear Friends) if the Lord see it meet further to permit the enemy to sift and winnow us, and that We must yet be further tryed: Nay, if He should so order it that we must be a suffring people all our dayes, yet let none be weary or faint in your minds, *for in the Lord Jehovah* (who is certainly with us) *there is everlasting strength, and he fainteth not, neither is weary, but he giveth power to the faint, and to him that hath no might, he encreaseth strength*; and so let your Trust be in Him, and let that godly resolution be put on (by every one of you) that was in *Job*, who (when God suffred Sathan to smite and afflict him) said, *Though thou kill me, yet will I trust in thee.* And indeed it's far better to suffer persecution with the People of God for good conscience towards him, then to dwell in the tents of wickedness, out of which God hath called and redeemed us.

And my Friends consider, whether can any go, or whether can any fly to escape Persecutions? certainly I know no place, neither do I believe there is any professing Christianity except it be in the tents of wickedness; *For he that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution*; And if any to escape persecutions and sufferings should return to the tents of wickedness again, out of which by the power and arme of God they are brought, and should desert their Testimony which God hath commited to them to bear for his name; it would hap unto them (as the Apostle said) according to the old Proverb, *the Dog is turned to his vomit, and the Sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire*; and the hand of the Lord would find such out, and the terrors of the Almighty would certainly seize upon them, and surprize them, which would be manifold more grievous to be borne, then all the suffrings that man can possibly inflict upon them, *for its a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*; for out of his hands no man can deliver, but out of the hands of blood thirsty and wicked men God can, and certainly in his own time will deliver, all who trust in him.

Wherefore (my dear Friends) put on boldness and courage, in the name of the Lord, and stand valiant Witnesses for his truth through all sufferings, which is the thing He hath called you unto, that so you may answer the end for which he hath visited you, and made known himself unto you; for consider, was it in loving kindness and compassion unto you that the Lord visited you, and made choice of you, to be Witnesses for him, that his name migh be glorified.

rified by you? or else was it because he had such need of you that he could not glorifie his name without you? surely all who are of an understanding heart will confess and acknowledge that it was only in love and mercy unto you that he thus made choice of you to suffer for his name, and to glorifie himself thereby, because he can work for the glory of his own name as he sees meet without you, or any of you, and can magnifie his power in the destruction or desolation of a Nation or People, (as in time past he hath done and is doing at this day) though he takes no delight therein; and therefore, he hath no need of you for that end, but you have need of Him; so that its only in love and compassion towards you, that he hath thus visited you, and also that you might have strong Consolation in your obedience unto him through all suffrings, which he hath called you unto.

And therefore my beloved Friends, gird up the loines of your minds, and keep close to and stedfast with the Lord, and with the eye of Faith look over all tribulations, unto him that is invisible, who will outlast them all, and will be with you in them, and through them all, and also when they shall be no more: For certainly Friends, God hath determined by and through these things to exalt his Kingdom, and to get himself a Name in the Earth above every Name, that every knee may bow, and every tongue confess thereunto, unto his Praise and Glory: And he hath highly honoured us, in that he hath been pleased to make choice of us, and to accept of us to appear on his behalfe, and (by sufferings) to contend for his cause, and to bear testimony in the life of his Spirit, against all Idolatry and superstitious, inventions, which hath gotten up in the dark night of Apostacy, for he hath put the Spiritual weapon into our hands, by the which the spiritual wickednesses (that are in high places) and the strong holds of iniquity must be beat down; and in vain do the Inhabitants of the Earth combine, or take councel together to stop or limit this work of God which he hath begun, and is carrying on amongst us, for he will certainly in the end be too hard for them, and they must and shall assuredly fall before him as their Predecessors did in times past, (who opposed his appearance in our forefathers) the Lord hath spoken it, and no weapon that's formed by them or that they shall form shall ever prosper or prevail so as to accomplish their decree, for God hath said it.

Wherefore my friends, with one heart, with one mind, and with one

one ſpirit ſerve yee the Lord in newneſs of life, and continue the aſſembling of your ſelves together in his fear, to wait upon him even as if theſe things did not at all attend you. And none be ſlack or backward in your Teſtimony herein for fear of ſufferings, leaſt hereby you do not only purchaſe the diſpleaſure of the Lord againſt your ſelves, but alſo weaken the hands of others, and thereby obtain the greater condemnation; but remember what happened to the fearful and unbeleiving ſpies, who weakened the hands of *Iſrael* of old that they could not enter the promiſed Land, for theſe things were written for our Learning, that we ſhould not tempt God as they tempted him, and were deſtroyed of the Deſtroyer. For certainly Friends, this I have long ſeen, and ſometimes declared alſo that if any to whom the viſitation of Gods love hath reached, and who are now called to bear witneſs to the name of the Lord by aſſembling themſelves together to wait upon him, and to worſhip him in Spirit, and have been perſwaded in their Conſciences by the Light of his Son that it was their duty ſo to do; I ſay (if ſuch for fear of ſuffrings for their Teſtimony therein) ſhall forſake the aſſembling of themſelves together (as the manner of ſome hath been) they will certainly bring upon themſelves greater ſuffrings, even from the hands of men, and more grievous to be borne, then that which for the aſſembling of our ſelves together ſeemes now to be threatned, except they wholly conform to Worſhip the Image that is made unto the Beaſt, that had a wound and doth live; and if ſo, then as I ſaid before, the Lord God will ſurely find ſuch out, which will be more heavy and grievous to bear then the reſt.

And therefore let all be unanimous in your Teſtimony for the Lord, in this day of trying and proving; and be a ſtrength and an incouragement one unto another in that gift of the ſpirit of God which from him you have received; and you will certainly find and feel the Lord preſent with you aſſiſting and furniſhing of you, with all Heavenly virtues, which are needfull or neceſſary for you in your preſent and future exerciſes; and the light of his countenance you will know to ſhine in your Tabernacle, and that is very precious, and pleaſant, and comely to behold; And indeed it's that alone which cauſeth us to walk cheerfully, through all tryals and exerciſes, and we experimentally know that he hath not failed us hitherto, but hath been alwayes preſent with us to deliver us out of many diſtreſſes, yea and aſſuredly will deliver us out of all in his

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own time which lasteneth when the measure of the sufferings of our Lord and Master is filled up in us; for we must be throughly tryed, and proved by sufferings, and thereby be made manifest unto the Nations about us, to be the peculiar people of God, before the measure of our sufferings be full.

And my friends, it is not the purpose of God, by these stormes and tempests that beats upon the building of God (or by the sufferings that attends us) to suffer his building or heritage to be laid wast; No, but thereby to beat down all false buildings, and outside professions, and to lay wast the Hills and barren Mountains, upon which the Whore sits, and to make her desolate; for they by clashing one against another, shall be broken one by another, or by biteing and devouring one another, will be destroyed one of another. But you my beloved, who keep stedfast with the Lord through these things, shall thereby be manifested in the view of all Nations to be the building of God, whose standing is upon the Rock of Ages (the Mountain of his Holiness) which all stormes, nor the Gates of Hell cannot prevaile against, (and thereby he will also exalt the Mountain of his own House (where *Israels* fold is) above all the Hills and barren Mountains (upon which we were sometime scattered, and from which we are now gathered by the arme and power of God) that so thereunto the gathering of the Nations may be, according to his promise, for was it not foreshewn by the Angel of the Lord, unto his Servant *John* in times past, that the Hornes of the Beast that should make War with the Saints, (and whom the Saints should overcome) should hate the Whore also, and should make her desolate.

My friends consider this, and in patience, and confidence that he is faithfull that hath promised, let us all wait upon the Lord, and be resigned up to be disposed of according to the councel of his will; and let him work, and carry on and prosper his work as he sees meet, for its he alone that worketh all our works for us and in us; and he knows what is best for us, and of what we stand in need, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly; and we (who are in the Faith) know, that all things shall work for our good who love him above all; therefore let us give up our all unto him, and cast our care upon him who takes care for us, whose wayes are unsearchable, and his Judgments past finding out.

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And so my beloved Friends, keep to, and watch the weighty foundation which stands sure through all stormes and tempests, and walk together in love, and therein serve one another, and let none give place to that spirit which would exercise Lordship over another, for that is not the serving spirit which is to be submitted unto, which begetteth into love and meekness, and gentleness; but that spirit will rather beget a root of bitterness, which may defile many and therefore not to be heeded; but the love being dwelt in, which vaunteth not it self, nor seeketh its own, but anothers good; that begets its own likeness: and in this you will stir up and provoke one another to love, and to good and to charitable works, and then by you the Gospel of God will be adorned, and you will have his blessing and peace in your hearts, which is of more value, and greater price with the upright in heart, then all the pleasures of sin, or gain of oppression; and so by your stedfastness, faithfulness, sincerity and simplicity in the truth, you will even ingage and provoke the Lord to appear on your behalfes, and to plead your cause with your adversaries, and to shorten the dayes of the wicked for your sakes. And so the Almighty God of love and peace be with you all, and multiply the riches of his Grace, mercy, and peace unto you all, that the poor in spirit may be inriched, the weak and feeble strengthened, and the sincere in heart established and confirmed; and unto him alone I do commit and commend you all by whose power and love unfeigned, I was at this time constrained to send this Epistle unto you, to stir you up to faithfulness, and diligence, and zeal towards God, and for his cause, in which my love towards you, and my care for you is manifested; In which I also kindly salute you in the bowels of Christ Jesus, whose life is my life, and whose love hath filled my heart in which I take my solace, and rest

From the Common Goal at Kendal, *the place of my confinement, for the Testimony of Jesus, and for the Word of God, 18th. of the seventh Moneth 1665.*

Your truly loving brother in the tribulation, and Kingdom, and Patience of Jesus.

Josiah Goale.

THE END.